

NMFS Office of Protected Resources

Review of March 4, 2016 Stranding Event

September 1, 2016

NMFS completed its review of the humpback whale stranding reported on NMFS's website on March 18, 2016. Based on the information available, NMFS determined the event does not warrant modifications to the Letters of Authorization for the U.S. Navy's Hawaii Southern California Training and Testing (HSTT) under 50 CFR 218.78(c)(1) or notice and comment procedures under 50 CFR 216.106(e) or 50 CFR 218.78(c)(1)(ii).

As reported, on March 4, 2016, Navy personnel reported a dead humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) floating offshore of Point Loma, California. The Navy confirmed the use of mid-frequency sonar within 72 hours before, and within 80 nautical miles of, their observation of this stranding.

The humpback whale was initially sighted freshly dead offshore on March 4, 2016 and subsequently washed ashore on March 7, 2016 at Silver Strand in an advanced decomposition condition. The NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center Stranding Response Team responded and conducted a necropsy on March 8, 2016. Results of the examination indicate that the likely cause of the stranding was due to a ship strike. The whale also had entanglement marks on the flukes in various stages of healing. Based on typical healing rates, the entanglement likely happened a week to two months prior to stranding. There were no reports of ship strikes by the Navy, or any other vessels, in the area prior to the stranding. Therefore, because the available information does not support a causal connection between the Navy's HSTT training or testing and this humpback whale stranding, NMFS concludes that this event does not warrant any actions pursuant to 50 CFR 216.106(e) or 50 CFR 218.78(c).